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ABSTRACT

Group effectiveness is determined by many things. It takes long and exacting effort to discover the precise combination that unlocks the door to success. Although many of the forces that shape group behavior may be intangible, involving subtle factors of personality, much of group activity can be analyzed scientifically. In this booklet, the ninth of the New Directions for Student Councils series, the author introduces the reader to the complex study of forces that determine how well--or how badly--a group works. The study of group dynamics, no matter how scientific, will not provide an organization with all of the answers to all of its problems. The editors are confident, however, that if those who are involved in the student activities program understand factors that influence group work, the result can be more constructive group behavior and more dynamic activities. Topics under discussion in the booklet include: (1) group dynamics--what's it all about, (2) effective student leadership, (3) popular theories about leaders, (4) forces active in student groups, (5) the effective student group, (6) group behavior, and (7) evaluating leadership skills. (Author/PC)

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# Group Dynamics for Student Activities

GEORGE E. MATHES

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# *Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

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# *Foreword*

WHAT MAKES a group tick? It is no easy question, for group effectiveness is determined by many things. It takes long and exacting effort to discover the precise combination that unlocks the door to success.

Although many of the forces that shape group behavior may be intangible, involving subtle factors of personality, much of group activity can be analyzed scientifically. In *Group Dynamics for Student Activities*, the ninth of the New Directions for Student Councils series, the author introduces the reader to the complex study of forces that determine how well—or how badly—a group works.

The study of group dynamics, no matter how scientific, will not provide an organization with all of the answers to all of its problems. We are confident, however, that if those who are involved in the student activities program understand factors that influence group work, the result can be more constructive group behavior and more dynamic activities.

We wish to express our special thanks to Mr. Mathes; to Gerald M. Van Pool, who, as NASSP Director of Student Activities, oversees the entire New Directions series; to Richard P. Harland, who edited the manuscript; and to Margaret Lilly, who typed the manuscript.

ELLSWORTH TOMPKINS
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*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Group Dynamics-What's It All About?

EVERY DAY, in every secondary school, students get together in groups for a variety of reasons: to join with teachers and administrators to solve problems of mutual concern; to discuss current issues affecting them; to meet in recognized student activity groups such as student council or Chess Club; or to visit with friends in the halls or lunchroom.

Sometimes these student groups identify and solve their problems in a logical and orderly manner. They move with relative ease from one step to another until the goal has been reached. The students communicate and cooperate with each other; they recognize the forces operating within the group and cope with them effectively. Leadership for the group is democratic and widely shared. These groups continuously evaluate their goals, procedures, and outcomes. They improve as they mature.

Other student groups are not so fortunate. The members of the group do not work well together. They experience fear and frustration. Conflict and tension become an expected part of every meeting. Individual needs and group goals are not realized and, as a result, interest and enthusiasm wane. Soon something happens to the group itself and for all practical purposes it no longer exists.

Most groups will be found at varying points between these two extremes. Why is there this difference? Why are some groups more effective than others?

To answer these questions, sociologists, psychologists, social

workers, and educators over the past twenty-five years have been studying scientifically individual and group behavior. Recently it has become an area of interest to more and more young people. The major function of this booklet is to apply what is known about group dynamics to typical high school students and youth groups. This material is addressed to those young people who seek to improve their own behavior as they work in student groups in American secondary schools.

## What Is a Group?

First, just what is meant by the term "group"? A group exists whenever two or more individuals interact with and relate to one another. As a high school student you are a member of many different groups: family, car pool, church youth group, student council, honor society, club, class, and probably many more. Each of these has a social structure somewhat different from a collection of individuals who might find themselves together by chance in a supermarket or on the same bus. Groups generally have common goals which are understood by the members. They have a certain structure, which may be formal or informal, depending upon the nature of the group. They develop common ways of behaving when they are in the group. The members in time identify with each other and develop their own power structure and hierarchy of values. In summary, they are more than aggregate of individuals; they are a collection of people interacting purposefully with one another.

## What Is Meant by "Dynamics"?

The word "dynamics" is derived from a Greek word meaning forces or action. It refers to the *constantly changing conditions* in the group—the forces, actions, reactions, conflicts, tensions, feelings, and the like that are evident within and among the

members of every student group at all times. It is this aspect of the group—the dynamic aspects of individual and group behavior in typical school-sponsored groups—with which we are most concerned in this pamphlet.

## What Is "Group Dynamics"?

During the past several years the term "group dynamics" has appeared with increasing frequency in the field of student activities. A review of the literature reveals a variety of meanings for the term. One reads about "group dynamics techniques" as though this were a new system to influence others. Others talk about "group dynamics" as if this were a magic powder which, when sprinkled lightly on a group, suddenly acts as a catalyst and solves all of the group's problems. Still others consider it a plot to do away with "rugged individualism" and replace it with what has been called "group-think." And, finally, we hear students asking: "Should we use group dynamics *or* parliamentary procedure for our meeting?" as if it were a method. None of these meanings is adequate.

Essentially, the term "group dynamics" describes a branch of the behavioral sciences that researches and studies the forces present when individuals get together in groups. "Group dynamics" also describes what is happening in all groups at all times whether or not the participants recognize it. Our concern will focus on the study of the complex forces acting among students when they gather as a group.

Remember, then, the phrase "group dynamics" is used to describe the action which goes on in every group. These forces either help or hinder; they facilitate or frustrate; they are functional or non-functional. The youth group that can identify and deal with these forces has a much better chance of success than the group which does not understand individual and group behavior.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Effective Student Leadership

THE GROUP has always been a crucial factor in accomplishing human progress. A democratic society derives much of its strength from the many groups which make up the larger society. Church groups, political parties, union organizations, professional associations all are examples of the network of interrelated groups that form a social order. For these groups to be potent and for democracy to function, there is need for effective leadership and group membership. That is what this chapter is all about.

## TYPES OF LEADERS

About thirty-five years ago, a group of researchers in the field of group dynamics conducted a series of now famous experiments on leadership style, the purpose being to measure the effects of three different kinds of leadership behavior on groups of boys engaged in typical play and work situations. The three types of leader behavior were called: (1) *authoritarian*, (2) *democratic*, and (3) *laissez-faire*.

The author recognizes the danger of typing leadership behavior, as he realizes that human characteristics are distributed over a full spectrum. However, this kind of pigeonholing has value for purposes of illustration.

Let us consider three different types of students, each appointed as chairman of a hypothetical committee to purchase a ten-dollar gift for the faculty adviser of the group. The examples cited below are taken from research conducted recently by the author at a student council workshop. The identical

hypothetical problem was presented to several different groups. Each time the chairman of the committee was appointed. The actual committee meetings were recorded on tape. The three examples were selected for their appropriateness here.

*Example One.* The *authoritarian* chairman decided *on his own* that the best gift for the teacher would be a set of three stereo records which he had seen on sale at a record shop. He even checked with the teacher's wife to be sure they did not own that particular album. All group members know that the adviser was a collector of classical music and had recently purchased a new stereo console. After all, what would be a better gift!

The chairman called a meeting of the committee for Friday evening in his home. After serving refreshments, he announced his decision. When other members suggested alternatives, the chairman became defensive, engaged in a bit of special pleading, and became downright hostile. In the final scene, the chairman stated that there wasn't any more time for "discussion" and volunteered to "give up" his Saturday afternoon to buy the album. The group went along with this decision, but they didn't like it.

*Example Two.* The *democratic* chairman polled the committee members as to the best time and place for a meeting. He further suggested that they be thinking of a suitable gift in the neighborhood of ten dollars. When the meeting was held, the chairman briefly stated the purpose of the meeting and suggested that one member serve as recorder. He then asked each member for his suggestions. The recorder listed the various suggestions on the chalkboard. The advantages and disadvantages of each gift were discussed. A consensus was reached after some give-and-take on the part of committee members. The chairman asked for volunteers to purchase the gift. Several agreed to shop for and purchase the gift the following Saturday. The chairman thanked all members for their help. The meeting adjourned on a friendly note.

*Example Three.* The *laissez-faire* chairman did nothing about

the assignment until someone reminded him of it just before the deadline. Only then did he agree to meet with the committee. When the meeting was held, someone else assumed the leadership for the group; much time was wasted with little accomplished. The group finally agreed to give the adviser a ten-dollar gift certificate.

**Authoritarian Leadership**

While all leaders exercise a certain amount of influence or control over the group, self-centered or authoritarian leaders dominate the group. In his control of the other members, the chairman in Example One brought to bear undue pressure and aggressiveness, and demanded too much adherence to his authority. This type of leadership relies more on persuasion than cooperation; more on power than permissiveness; more on status than consensus.

Authoritarian-led groups at the outset very often produce a great amount of work in a short period of time. The leader identifies the problem, considers several alternatives, decides upon a plan, and influences the group to put the plan in operation. First, he may attempt to "sell" his associates on his plan. If this is not successful, he then "tells" them when and how he wants the job done. Authoritarian-led groups generally experience more hostility, conflict, tension, and aggression than other types of groups. Group members react in a number of ways. They fight back and become aggressive or they do the opposite—they withdraw. In the long run, these groups tend to produce less actual work and the group members become more and more dependent upon the status leader and less and less original.

**Democratic Leadership**

The second of the three committee meetings was what has been called "democratic"; that is, its leader encouraged a high degree of interaction between himself and the group and among group members.

In a democratic meeting, the environment is free and relatively permissive. The democratic leader stands somewhere between

the autocratic and the laissez-faire leader. He does not dominate or control; neither does he abdicate his responsibility and allow the group to dominate or "sail without a rudder." He exercises a certain amount of control but encourages others to share the leadership function. He tempers his power over others by distributing the power among all members of the group. He has confidence in himself, but he also has respect for all members of the group.

Democratically-led groups may take a longer time to get started but they generally get where they want to go. They become increasingly productive as they work together over a period of time. The individuals gain great respect for their leader and for each member of the group. They listen and evaluate ideas rather than persons. They enjoy working together as a team and express great satisfaction in their accomplishments.

**Laissez-faire Leadership**

The leader's behavior in the last of the three examples is generally described in the literature as laissez-faire. This term literally means to let alone, to allow people to do or act as they choose. The term "laissez-faire leader" may be a contradiction since the leader in this case is not a leader at all. He exercises little influence or control over the group: the group controls him. Fundamentally, he is a weak, unproductive, and passive individual.

However, the laissez-faire leader may view himself as being extremely democratic. He may actually wish to involve the group. It might well be that some who are classified as laissez-faire leaders may actually be displaying self-control and discipline in order to get the group involved.

Laissez-faire led groups generally do very little actual work toward the goal. They spend a great deal of time groping to define the problem. Once the problem is identified, they are less productive in suggesting alternatives and making decisions. Very often in groups under this sort of leader, another person assumes the actual leadership of the group.

## How Do You See Yourself?

Three examples of leadership style have been cited. Undoubtedly, you have seen leaders similar to the ones described on many occasions. At one extreme you have observed student leaders who tended to take over: they assumed most of the authority for the group and for making most of the group decisions. At the other extreme, you have observed student leaders who did just the opposite: they assumed little or no authority for the group and rarely expressed a feeling or opinion. Somewhere in between these two extremes you have observed student leaders who tended to be permissive and democratic, willing to lead and at the same time willing to share the leadership load with others.

And now the big question: What kind of a leader are you? What do you do when you are asked to assume a leadership role or when you are elected to a position of leadership? Have you ever taken an honest look at yourself in the leadership mirror and answered these fundamental questions? Now would be a good time to do just that.

# Popular Theories About Leaders

THERE SEEMS to be no consensus as to just what leadership really is, although, ironically, more has perhaps been written on this topic than on any other in the field of group dynamics. The real nature of leadership eludes the behavioral scientist and the practitioner alike. We have experienced a proliferation of theories about leadership but no one theory is able to define precisely the nature of leadership itself. Each theory has some strengths and, therefore, each has some value to the high school students wishing to improve their leadership behavior. Each theory, however, when carried to extremes, contains obvious weaknesses. Brief descriptions of some of these theories follow.

*The "Leaders Are Born" Theory*

The "Leaders Are Born, Not Made" theory was once quite widely accepted. According to this theory, leadership consists of a set of personality traits or abilities that some people are born with and others are not. The expression, "He's a natural born leader" is heard even today in faculty lounges when candidates for student offices are discussed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Behavioral scientists and psychologists now have ample evidence to support the hypothesis that leadership can be learned. The expression should be re-written to read, "Leaders Are Made, Not Born."

*The "Influence Others" Theory*

A second hypothesis is called the "Influence Others" theory. This became popular a few years ago; it implied that a leader

was a person who had the ability to influence others in some preconceived direction or way—with or without their consent or involvement. This is a dangerous concept in a democratic society if there ever was one.

*The "Traits" Theory*

The "Traits" theory is another that has seen better days. According to this theory, a leader was a person who had certain traits of leadership, traits either inherited or acquired. If you were born with them, so much the better. If you had to learn them, you, as a would-be leader, had a problem.

These physical and personality characteristics, such as honesty, courage, height, physical prowess, initiative, stamina, intelligence, were supposed to be the indicators of leadership ability. Extensive research failed to determine just what the traits of leadership actually were. Another problem inherent in the traits approach was its emphasis on the *selection*—as opposed to the *development*—of leaders.

*The "Great White Father" Theory*

The "Great White Father" theory is based on the hypothesis that a person is a leader by virtue of the position he holds, such as principal of the school, president of the class, chairman of the committee, foreman on the production line, commander of the ship, etc. This concept of leadership has its strongest supporters in the military, in government, in industry, and in business. The theory, simply stated, implies that the leadership lies with the position rather than with the person.

*The "Situational" Theory*

According to the "Situational" theory, leadership is a function of the situation at hand rather than the person or what he does. The type of leader needed depends primarily on the task at hand. Within this framework, a leader can emerge only if the conditions are right for him to use whatever skill he may possess. A student, for example, may be the best quarterback on the football team, but the skills needed here may not be the best ones to lead a discussion group or serve as a member of the student council. The weakness of this theory is that it places

too much emphasis on the environment as determining factor rather than on the individual and what he does.

*The "Needs" Theory*

In the view of those who hold to the "Needs" theory, the leader is the person who can best identify the needs of the group and help the group satisfy its needs and achieve its goals. Said another way, he is the person who works to help the group identify and solve its problem. This line of reasoning emphasizes "group process," "shared decision-making," "involvement," and "sensitivity training," more than earlier theories. The effective student council president, therefore, would be the person who does most to help his council to become more creative and productive, who aids his fellow council members in recognizing and solving some of their own problems, who values and practices democratic and permissive behavior, and who is recognized by the group as a leader. He is the leader by virtue of the group's willingness to be led.

The "Needs" theory has one weakness: Sometimes the tendency to please, to be popular, to go along with the crowd, to do what others want done, compromises one's own better judgment. This person actually may not be leading the group so much as being led by the group.

## A New Look at Leadership

Our understanding of leadership has changed dramatically during the past half century. It is still changing and will continue to change as new research and practical experience modify our present understanding of leadership. We have seen old theories fall by the wayside as new theories are advanced. We have seen that, at the turn of the century, most people believe that leadership either was inherited or was achieved by virtue of one's position in the community. Somewhat later, it was assumed that leadership was a function of each specific situation. The situation determined the nature of leadership needed. Following World War II, much of the research in group dynamics dealt with the various types of leadership: autocratic or authoritarian, democratic or permissive, and laissez-faire. This

research led to the study of the effect of different kinds of leaders on the group being led.

More recently the emphasis has focused on what leaders *do* rather than *what kind of a person* makes the best leader, with stress put on the values of group membership as well as of group leadership.

## Guidelines for Leadership

The following guidelines are presented in the belief that they will be helpful to the student desiring to improve or modify his ability to work with others in a leadership or membership capacity.

### *Leadership Can Be Learned*

All of the available research seems to indicate that leadership consists of certain skills that can be learned and continuously improved. Leadership, then, is not fixed by virtue of inheritance; its skills have been identified through both research and practical experience. Once identified, they can be taught and—through experience—sharpened.

### *Leadership Is Both Diagnosis and Treatment*

A physician rarely stops when he has diagnosed an ailment; he generally prescribes treatment based on his diagnosis. The same principle applies to effective group behavior: a fundamental leadership process is that of diagnosing group difficulties and then doing something constructive about them.

A student council member, for example, might notice that the difficulty in a particular student council meeting was the monopolizing of the discussion by one member. Having diagnosed the trouble, the member could tactfully point out that this person's point was well taken and suggest that others might like to express their points of view. By thus expanding the discussion, the group's problem, hopefully, will be solved.

### *Leadership Recognizes Group Goals and Individual Needs*

People join groups and participate in group activities for a variety of reasons; two of the more important are mentioned

here. First, they feel that the group serves some useful function in the school or community. It does something important. They believe in the purposes or goals of the group. Second, and equally important, students join and participate in group activities to satisfy their own *personal* needs: for recognition; for status; to be creative and productive; to "belong."

These two reasons are certainly interrelated. Effective leadership, or effective group behavior if you like, must provide for *both* of these motives.

*Leadership Implies Good Human Relations*

It must be noted that the effective leader or group member has great respect for the individual. This human relations aspect of group dynamics cannot be overemphasized. Group members must be sensitive to the feelings and needs of other members of the group. Each individual should believe that he has a unique contribution to make to the group and all group members should encourage each person to make his contribution. Students who are insensitive to the feelings or needs of others make very poor leaders; they are generally so impressed with their own position or status that they are unaware of the other human resources in the group.

## Summary

We have seen that leadership is a complex set of functions that can be learned and improved. Good human relations means that the leader realizes that each human being has value and can make a contribution to the group. Leadership efforts hopefully will result in personal satisfaction to the individual as well as betterment of the group.

The demands for leadership are vastly more complicated today than ever before. Therefore, the modern secondary school should provide opportunities for students to have leadership experiences while they are in school.

In the next three chapters the emphasis will be placed on the group. Characteristics of effective groups will be discussed.

It will be seen that most groups have two functions: a task (or tasks) to carry out and a responsibility to strengthen itself as a group. We will discuss the practices that help and those that hinder the group as it works at performing its two functions.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Forces Active in Student Groups

GROUP DYNAMICS is the scientific study of the forces operating within every group that cause the individuals to act in the way they do and the group to behave in the manner it does. These forces are at work whenever two or more persons get together in a group situation. Every group has its own pattern of forces, its own dynamics. Behavioral scientists have identified three different kinds of forces: intrapersonal forces; interpersonal forces; and extrapersonal forces.

## INTRAPERSONAL FORCES

Intrapersonal forces stem from within the individual. They are an integral part of each person's total personality, causing him to behave in the manner he does. These forces are in action whenever the individual and another individual or individuals engage in any group activity. For example, so-called personality clashes, verbal conflicts, arguments, and the like are the outward manifestations of inner needs which have not been met satisfactorily.

Each student needs food, water, shelter, and the like; i.e., he has basic physical and biological needs. Less understood, but equally important, are his psychological requirements. Each student wants to feel accepted, to be understood, to have friends, to "belong", to have the respect of others. Each student also needs to feel that he is making a contribution to the welfare of the group and that this contribution is recognized by others. Each student also wants to be creative and to have

new experiences. These intrapersonal forces determine in part how an individual will act in group situations.

### Interpersonal Forces

Interpersonal forces are those forces that operate among the various members of a group. They may be either positive or negative. Their origin lies outside the individual. In a sense, they are the result of previous action by someone else. Nevertheless, each individual is responsible for the way he reacts to previous action.

Each student brings to the group a set of behavioral patterns. The other members of the group observe and react to these patterns. Each student also reacts to the actions of other members in a positive or negative way.

Effective group members are those who have learned to identify and deal effectively with their own personality patterns that might be offensive to others. They have also learned to recognize and to cope with the anti-social behavior patterns of others. An understanding of the interpersonal forces that exist among group members is mandatory if one is to become a more productive and valued member of any student group.

### Extrapersonal Forces

Extrapersonal forces originate outside the group but affect both the individuals and the group. These forces may be considered as the impact of the total environment on the group. Who has not attended a meeting when the humidity and temperature rose to such a bothersome level that the group's effectiveness was damaged? Excess noise—from a low-flying jet or from a passing truck or train—is another example of interference by outside forces. World tensions and the announcement of unfavorable news can seriously influence group behavior. And then there is the pressure of time: the clock on the wall is more than a silent observer whenever deadlines have to be met and decisions have to be made.

Students should work to eliminate as many of these distractions as possible. It has been demonstrated that the physical conditions of the meeting room have much to do with the success of a meeting. A pleasant, relaxed environment, free from outside noise and confusion, is helpful to the group's deliberations. The physical arrangement of the room itself affects group meetings. These are examples of what must be considered in improving group effectiveness. Even though these extrapersonal forces find their source outside the individual and group, many of them can be dealt with by students who understand their effect on group productivity and efficiency.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# The Effective Student Group

In almost any high school, the observer will find a great and sometimes confusing variety of clubs, committees, organizations, social sets, and the like. Each of these student groups has a personality of its own. Each is somewhat different from the others. Each has an overlapping membership with other student groups, but even then the members may act differently in the various groups of which they are a part.

Some student groups are, of course, more effective than others. In studying groups of all kinds, formal as well as informal, behavioral scientists have found certain characteristics which most effective groups seem to have. These properties most commonly found in groups include the following.

*A Definable Membership*

Earlier, a "group" was described as one or more individuals who interacted with each other. A group was found to be more than an aggregate of individuals: the members had certain characteristics which set them apart. The members of the group began to think of themselves as a unit. They knew each other by name and frequently engaged in cooperative group activity.

In formal groups, such as the student council or National Honor Society, members frequently are elected or selected according to prescribed standards. The formal group has an organizational structure with a hierarchy of status positions. Its members meet regularly and use standardized procedures to accomplish their business. They very often wear insignia, emblems, or other symbols of membership.

Some student groups are less formal, but nevertheless they have a definable membership. The membership may be more fluid than in the formal groups. The membership may change from time to time and, in fact, with some groups it changes frequently. Take the double-dating group, for example. Sometimes the nature of this group is determined by who has a car or can borrow one from the family. Even so, these are groups in the true use of the term since the members identify with each other. They think of themselves as a group. They have "group consciousness."

*Common Goals or Purposes*

For a group to be effective, its members must understand the reasons or purposes that justify the group's existence. This is especially true of groups that are just beginning to develop. There should be some clear understanding of the goals the group wishes to achieve. Furthermore, the students should view these goals as important to themselves and achievable.

In some student groups, the statement of purpose is clearly set forth in the constitution or charter of the group. It is commonly agreed, for instance, that the primary purpose of the student council is to provide large numbers of our future citizens with practical experience in the ways of a democratic society. In addition to this general purpose, councils may develop their own specific goals or purposes, which will vary from time to time and from school to school. Nevertheless, the purposes are clear to the council members and generally understood by the student body.

In other groups, the common purpose or reason for being may be implied rather than written; however, it is well known to the group's members. Take, for example, the group that frequently sits together in the school cafeteria: they simply wish to eat with their friends and engage in conversation.

*Knowledge of Group History and Traditions*

Most student groups have a group history—traditions that influence the group's behavior. Effective groups know and understand these norms or standards. A new group—one which

has just been formed—does not have these advantages. One of the first tasks of members of a new group is to develop standards to help determine the group's action in the future.

In many school-sponsored groups, there is an annual change in membership. Each year, members graduate and new students enroll. In a sense the group, as a group, no longer exists when the annual graduation from school takes place. This is another reason why the history and traditions are so important to school groups of all kinds. Effective groups, then, review and understand their history and traditions.

*Participation Patterns that Involve Group Members*

In every group, there is a wide variance in the nature and amount of participation. Some students participate more often in group situations and do it better than others. However, in an effective group, all members participate in the projects and activities of the group.

To achieve this high participation, many obstacles might have to be hurdled. For example, some students may be hyperactive and overparticipators. In a group meeting, for example, this kind of person may monopolize the conversation and thereby limit the participation of other members. This practice is particularly dangerous when the overparticipator is the status leader or chairman of the group. It leads to one-way communication, which, as we will see later, is less effective than two-way or multi-way communication.

Another problem that hinders full participation arises when some students assume that they must do all the "doing" that must be done. Naturally, a group cannot fulfill its purposes unless it does something. Some students think that, unless *they* do a certain job, it just won't get done to their personal satisfaction. What they forget is that every person wants to participate in the group's activities. No one wants to be "left out." Every effort should be made to involve all the members of a group in both the "talking" and "doing" aspects of group activity.

Sometimes the difficulty lies with an overly participating

faculty adviser, whose actions adversely affect the group and its effectiveness. The writer once observed an especially graphic illustration of this phenomenon and, in this situation, the students clearly had little opportunity to express themselves or to be creative. Every project was done routinely just as it had been done each year since the adviser "took over." Seldom, if ever, would the adviser allow a project to fail, even if it meant he had to do all of the work himself. Needless to say, by the end of the school year he had to do the work himself.

In summary, an effective group achieves a high degree of active participation from *all* of its members. This is especially important when one considers that a democratic society derives much of its success from the large number of individuals and groups actually involved in the work of the community.

*Permissive Group Atmosphere*

The atmosphere in which the group meets, conducts its business, and accomplishes its purposes plays a large role in determining whether the group will be effective. This is referred to in the literature as "group atmosphere" or "social climate."

This group atmosphere or social climate is not as intangible as you might believe. To the contrary, it can very easily be observed in any group when the observer becomes sensitive to it. Sometimes group atmosphere is characterized by such descriptive terms as friendly, permissive, warm, informal, free, empathetic, intimate, close, amiable, chummy, congenial, cordial, sociable, and even by such slang terms as "groovy" and "cool." At other times, the atmosphere is characterized by such terms as boring, cold, formal, hostile, tense, explosive, restrained, chilly, antagonistic, frigid, and unfriendly.

If the group atmosphere is cordial, every person believes that he belongs to and contributes to the group. Each member depends upon every other person for satisfaction of personal needs. Each person knows that he has dignity and worth and is respected by other group members. Ideas and suggestions are recognized and studied without regard to the status of the

person making the suggestions. Members are willing to express their genuine feelings. There exists a high degree of cohesiveness within the group.

*Shared Leadership*

Traditionally we talk about leadership and followership. Student council officers and committee chairmen are assumed to be "the leaders" and the others are assumed to be "the followers." However, council members should strive to break down this dichotomy and to encourage all members to assume a share of the leadership responsibilities of the council. By doing this, the council will benefit from the varied abilities of all the members.

The student council not only should provide for shared leadership among council members, but also should extend this opportunity to other students not on the council. The entire student body should be encouraged to contribute ideas, evaluate suggestions, carry out responsibilities, and in other ways participate in council projects and activities.

*Effective Communication*

Good communication among the members is an absolute requirement for effective group behavior. Without adequate communication, student groups, as we know them, could not exist. It is through communication that students reach some understanding of each other. It is through communication that individuals influence others and are influenced by others. Of what, then, does this all-important activity consist?

Communication has three basic elements: sending, receiving, and reacting to information. Communication is not complete unless there has been some *response* on the part of the receiver. The communicator sends a message which conveys some meaning to the receiver. The receiver then must *respond to* the message as he perceives it. As an example, the chairman of a meeting asks the secretary to "read the minutes of the previous meeting." The secretary responds by reading the minutes. The chairman asks for additions or corrections. A group member responds by stating that the "date for the class picnic

should have been May 15 rather than May 14 as read." The secretary responds by correcting the minutes. Communication is not complete until the message has been received and there has been some response by the receiver. This fact is often overlooked by students who feel that if they say something, it will be received and understood.

Students communicate with each other in a variety of ways. It is assumed that communication is primarily a speaking or writing skill. This is certainly part of it but not all. Communication also involves skill in listening. A common problem in communication is the failure of the listener to understand the message fully. If a teacher uses highly technical terms and speaks over the head of the students, he has not communicated with the group. He has not been understood and no response has been made.

Students also communicate by other than spoken or written language. An individual's posture, the shrug of a shoulder, his facial expression, and other gestures also communicate feelings and thoughts. If a person looks bored while attending a social function, others will certainly read the message and act accordingly.

In summary, an effective group is characterized by a high degree of communication among its members; that is, ideas and suggestions flow easily among all of the group's members. And, finally, a dynamic student council realizes that information must flow to and from the various groups that compose the school.

*Flexible Procedures*

As a skilled craftsman uses all of the tools in his kit appropriate to the task at hand, so will a student group, when approaching a given task, use all the procedures that research and experience have demonstrated to be practical.

All groups must use some standardized procedures to conduct their business or to get things accomplished. Legislative and deliberative groups have found that parliamentary procedure, such as "Robert's Rules of Order," is necessary for

their meetings. Other, less formal groups have adapted "Robert's Rules" for their own use. The student council may wish to use an adaptation of parliamentary procedure in conducting its official business.*

Student groups might well find that the strict, formal rules of parliamentary procedure are inappropriate for the group's tasks. In fact, rigid rules usually hinder rather than help the group's progress. They tend to restrict the discussion of alternatives and the free flow of information. However, often the fault lies not with the rules themselves, but in the group's unwillingness to alter them with more appropriate methods. Student groups should experiment with techniques that have been found to be useful in group process; these include "buzz groups," "brain storming," listening exercises and others.†

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* Your attention is directed to *A Call to Order*, by Donald I. Wood, another pamphlet in the New Directions for Student Councils Series, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

† In a BRAIN STORMING session, group members are allowed to propose solutions to a given problem as they wish, with no criticism or discussion of their suggestions permitted at the time. The leader must emphasize this point: *absolutely no discussion of an idea is permitted during the session.* Every idea is recorded, no matter how impractical or "far out" it appears to be. The group is warned to register neither approval nor disapproval in any way. The leader himself must guard against making comments about an idea. When all ideas have been recorded they are usually assigned to a committee for evaluation. "Brain storming" is valuable because people display more willingness to make suggestions when they know that there can be no criticisms made about their ideas. In addition, many "far out" ideas, in actual practice, have been found to be quite satisfactory when given further study.

The term BUZZ-GROUPING refers to the practice of breaking up a large group into many small groups for purposes of discussion. Sometimes the sub-groups—which generally total about 5-7 people—are given problems to discuss, their task being to suggest possible solutions. At other times, the sub-groups are used to question the students about their concerns or problems. (This latter practice is sometimes called a "problem census.") Typically, each

*Efficient Organizational Structure*

An effective school group has an organizational structure that satisfies the needs of the group. There is a wide range of formality among student groups. The student council exemplifies the highly structured school group. In a typical high school, the officers of the council are elected by and represent the entire school. Very often each of the classes—freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior—is represented by one or more class officers elected by the class. Also, the council may have a representative from each administrative unit or home room. The student council, since it represents all students, is therefore more formal in structure than most groups.

But other student groups are not as formally structured. The typical student group is composed of volunteers, students who choose to join and participate. Once the basic group is formed, however, the structure within the group may be quite well organized with the volunteers electing officers, appointing committee chairmen, conducting business, and sponsoring projects and activities.

*Recognition of Individual Needs*

An understanding of group behavior must begin with an understanding of individual behavior. We have seen, in our discussion of the intrapersonal forces active in all groups, how each individual brings his psychological needs to the group meeting. Individuals, of course, vary in the way in which they express these needs. An effective student council is aware of

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buzz-group selects a chairman and recorder. After a relatively short period of time—such as 10-30 minutes—the whole group reconvenes and brief reports are submitted by each buzz-group. Buzz-grouping has two great advantages: first, students are usually more willing to speak up in a small group; second, buzz-groups involve all members and this wide involvement should be a goal for any group.

Try this LISTENING EXERCISE: no member of the group is allowed to present an idea or suggestion until he has repeated what the previous speaker said—*to the previous speaker's satisfaction.* It is not as easy as it sounds.

these psychological needs and has learned to channel them productively. The wise council leader knows that it makes as much sense to criticize a fellow council member for seeking status or recognition as it does to criticize him for being hungry. If his need for attention is so great that he irritates the group by monopolizing the conversation, the fault is not in his needing recognition, for this is a need of all, but in his not knowing how to get the attention in an acceptable way.

*Utilization of Resources*

An effective group is one that has learned to use all the resources within the group as well as those available to the group from outside. In every student group the members soon learn to identify certain individuals who have specific skills. One member may be able to take minutes or serve as group recorder better than others and do it willingly. Another may have the ability to do the art work or to serve on the calling committee. The group should attempt to put these diverse talents to work.

The group should also encourage the passive or less able members of the group to become more productive. These potential sources of talent often go unrecognized, and the resulting omission makes a group less dynamic.

It is a mistake to assume that student groups can recognize and solve all of their own problems. They need help. Some of the help should come from the faculty members themselves. Students should exploit their own resources first, but there comes a time when every student group requires friendly advice from those with more experience.

Student groups should also tap the resources of the community. Almost every community has local chapters of national organizations that are eager to help. The American Legion, the D.A.R., the P.T.A. are examples of community groups interested in fostering good citizenship in the school and community. The library is another often-neglected source of advice.

*Evaluation*

An effective student group continuously evaluates itself. Evaluation attempts to measure the value of an activity in terms of its purpose. Student groups should evaluate their goals, their organizational structure, their projects, their procedures, and their own attitudes and patterns of participation. Too often we think of evaluation as something that comes at the end of a project or an activity. Evaluation properly conducted precedes, goes on during, and follows every group activity; it is a continuous process.

*Unity*

An effective student group has the ability to act as a unit. The fundamental difference between a group and a collection of individuals lies in the group's being able to recommend action and to make decisions. It is much more than a collection of individuals going their separate ways. The student group respects individual differences, but when a recommendation or decision has to be made, it acts as a whole. An effective student group displays group loyalty, group spirit, group consciousness; it acts as a unit.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Group Behavior

RECENT STUDIES of individual behavior under many different circumstances have identified certain "roles" that all group members play at one time or another. In every student group certain tasks have to be performed by group members if the group is to move effectively from where it is to where it wants to go. These tasks must be coordinated in a team effort. Some of the actions performed by group members help the group reach its objective smoothly and efficiently. Some of the actions help strengthen and build the group. At the same time, some of the actions neither help the group reach its objective nor aid in maintaining and strengthening the group itself. This means that some of the actions that group members perform are more beneficial than others. We describe these two aspects—these two types of roles or behavioral patterns—as "functional behavior" and "non-functional behavior."

*Functional behavior* consists of any action by a group member which is positive and beneficial to the group. *Non-functional behavior* is the opposite; that is, any action by a group member which is negative or harmful.

The following classification of leader and member roles has found wide acceptance. However, the reader should be warned against assigning group members rigidly to any one category. It is most often the case that students, as they work in groups, will manifest combinations of different behaviors and will not fit exclusively into any one category.

## Functional Behavior

Students of group dynamics generally break down functional behavior into two sub-categories: (1) Task Functions and (2) Maintenance Functions. These two types are equally important and must be kept in balance if group goals are to be reached and if the group is to improve in its ability to recognize and solve problems.

### Task Functions—Goal-Centered Roles

The terms "task functions" and "goal-centered roles" refer to behavior that is primarily concerned with getting the group's job done, its task accomplished, its goal reached. These individual behavioral patterns consist largely of attempts to help the group identify goals, suggest alternatives, select projects and activities, find solutions to common problems, and evaluate the results. Each student may perform more than one goal-centered role in any given situation. In a typical student council meeting, it is not unusual for an articulate member to contribute several different kinds of productive service for the group.

Task functions which are commonly observed in student groups include the following:

*Initiating*—actions such as proposing new ideas, suggesting different procedures, attempting novel projects or activities, identifying and defining unique problems, or developing better evaluation techniques.

*Contributing*—action similar to those described above, except that in this case it need not be new or novel. It may simply be the suggestion of an idea or a plan that has been found to be useful in the past and that may apply to the present situation.

*Information seeking*—requests for additional information germane to the problem at hand. When a council member asks for additional data, he is helping the group reach the goal or solve the problem.

*Information giving*—the provision of relevant facts or authoritative information when needed by the group. This may

be either in response to a question seeking information or to a suggestion that the group needs additional information.

*Opinion seeking*—requests an expression of group members' thinking. This is a bit different from information seeking, which is concerned primarily with facts and information.

*Opinion giving*—an expression of belief—as opposed to facts and information—relevant to the discussion or problem at hand.

*Clarifying*—the probing for meaning or understanding. Sometimes the clarifier asks questions which, when answered, help clear up misunderstandings or confusion. At other times the clarifier states or repeats what he thinks previous speakers have said.

*Elaborating*—action that further develops an idea or a suggestion. Sometimes this is done by giving examples that make the meaning of previous suggestions more meaningful.

*Coordinating*—pulling together or showing the relationships among various ideas and suggestions.

*Facilitating*—helping the group accomplish its purpose by performing procedural jobs, such as distributing copies of the agenda, opening the windows or closing the door, turning off lights, and running the projector.

*Expediting*—arranging the physical setup of the room; seeing that the screen and projector are available when needed, or running errands.

*Summarizing*—tying together related ideas or suggestions. The summarizer often reviews the position of the group as he sees it from previous discussion.

*Consensus testing*—checking to find out if the group is ready to accept or reject a specific proposal. Sometimes this is done just to determine to what extent agreement has been reached. This is like sending up a "trial balloon" to see if the group has reached the point when it can safely reach a conclusion or make a decision.

*Recording*—keeping a written record of the ideas, suggestions, recommendations, feelings, or decisions that have been part of

the meeting. This record need not be used only at the beginning of a meeting as is the case of "minutes," but may be used at any time during a meeting to check up on previous discussions or actions. Recording may be performed by any member of the group as well as by the designated recorder or secretary.

*Evaluating*—appraising the value of an idea, suggestion, proposal, project, or procedure in terms of the task or job that has to be done.

**Maintenance Functions—Group-Centered Roles**

The terms "maintenance functions" and "group-centered roles" refer to those actions primarily concerned with maintaining and strengthening the group. Whenever students work together in a meeting, they are also doing something *to* or *with* each other. They are acting and reacting to one another; they are communicating with one another in a variety of different ways; they are expressing beliefs, fears, and frustrations; they may or may not be improving their ability to work together as a group. This dynamic aspect of the group is just as important to the group as the job or task the group has to do.

As in the case of the task functions cited above, each student in the group may perform many different roles at different times. In fact, students may perform very differently when they are in different groups and when they are exposed to different circumstances.

Commonly observed maintenance functions include the following.

*Encouraging*—actions that tend to invite, inspire, reassure, and comfort other members of the group. This includes such behavior as being friendly, warm, and responsive to others and their points of view. Whenever a student gives recognition or praise to another member for his contribution, he is actually encouraging that person and others to become involved.

*Harmonizing*—mediating the differences between group members. It is inevitable that different points of view will be expressed in any discussion. However, when these differences become sharp and pointed, there arises the need to reduce

tension and to move towards reconciliation. Helping students to recognize and to explore their differences is healthy and productive behavior.

*Compromising*—reducing tension by modifying a position previously taken. The compromiser may have to yield to another person in order to keep harmony within the group. Sometimes he may even have to admit an error. It is more than "coming half way"; it is actually "compromising" one's own position for the betterment of the group.

*Communication*—any action that results in better exchanges of information and thinking among all group members. Such statements as "John has not had an opportunity to present his opinion" or "If those of us who have presented our point of view would not repeat ourselves, others would have a chance to contribute," are examples of ways to keep the channels of participation open. Sometimes the more verbal members of a group will have to discipline themselves in order to encourage the less verbal to speak.

Another term commonly used to describe this kind of behavior is "gate keeping." This term implies, of course, that the communication gate should be swung open so that all members of the student group will have a chance to participate.

*Standard setting*—any action that aids in the establishment of group goals, procedures to be followed, or standards to be met.

*Tension relieving*—the lowering of the stress and strain which has built up within various group members. Whenever a person senses that a serious conflict has developed between group members, he should do whatever he can to reduce the tension. He should try to divert attention from the unpleasant situation to a more pleasant one. Sometimes the best way to do this is by changing the subject or by cracking a joke.

*Listening*—a specific action which, unfortunately, is often neglected in any discussion of group process. Some student leaders are so preoccupied with their own thoughts and what they want to say, that they really never hear or react to what

others say or do. Attentive listening and reacting to what others are saying will improve any group.

*Observing*—students should look around and react to what they see. Whenever one sees a fellow council member "doodling," for example, tactfully involve him in more purposeful activity; this will be a contribution to the group.

*Following*—at one time or another, most of us are followers. This is not to say that following cannot be helpful, for it can. However, in this context following means going along with the group and assisting with group activities. This definition does not require "blind following," or "subjecting" one's self to the "pressures" of the group. One can be a good follower and still actively contribute.

*Sensing*—being sensitive to the needs of others. The effective member "senses" the needs of other group members and does something about it. For instance, in a typical club meeting, Jim "senses" that Alice is hurt because she was not appointed to a certain committee. Jim suggests to the committee's chairman that Alice could make a special kind of contribution and therefore would be a valuable committee member. The chairman, appreciating the suggestion, reacts immediately by appointing Alice to the committee.

### Non-functional Behavior

In every group activity, whether it is the school's football team or a meeting of senior class officers, there will almost assuredly be some behavior that is not productive, behavior that might be described as "individual centered" rather than "goal centered" or "group centered." This is behavior which neither contributes to the success of the project nor helps to build or to strengthen the group. Its only purpose seems to be a selfish one—to satisfy aggressive, and perhaps even hostile, personal needs.

But, as non-functional behavior occurs in all groups at one time or another, we should learn to identify it and to cope with it. It should be viewed as symptomatic of hidden illness—malignant illness. The student who can look constructively

at his own non-functional behavior and the non-functional behavior of others has a good chance of becoming a better group member and leader.

Examples of non-functional behavior roles are listed below:

*Blocking*—any action that interferes with the progress of the group. Examples include deliberately getting off the topic, citing personal experiences unrelated to the problem, arguing, curtly rejecting the ideas of others, using "tricks of the trade" to divert attention away from the task, and using delaying tactics.

*Aggressing*—occurs when a member blames others for his own mistakes. Showing hostility to individuals or to the group as a whole, attacking the motives of others, deflating the ego or self-image of others are ways by which members show aggression.

*Withdrawing*—opposite of aggression. People withdraw from a group by exhibiting such behavior as doodling, whispering to others, daydreaming, being very formal, refusing to listen, and by other acts of non-participation.

*Seeking recognition or status*—calling attention to oneself frequently by excessive talking, bragging, boasting and affecting distracting mannerisms or dress.

*Dominating*—attempting to take over a group by excessive talking, pulling rank, and imperiously giving directions and assigning duties to others. Frequently—and ironically—these dominators, when they are given a responsibility, fail completely to carry it out.

*Special Pleading*—going "all out" to get a point across. The violators generally have hidden motives or pet projects. They refer frequently to such terms as "authorities in the field," "grass roots," the "average person," "all the kids in my class," and other cliches just to cloud the issue and to support their point of view.

*Distracting*—diverting attention from the task at hand. A distracting person very often comes late, refuses to get down to business, interrupts others, gets off the topic, and whispers con-

stantly. This playboy type puts on quite a show while not actually getting involved in the work of the group himself. Horseplay is a good word to describe this kind of non-productive behavior.

*Manipulating*—attempting to control the group by pulling strings or rank. Very often the manipulator will resort to blatant flattery if he thinks it will get him what he wants. Sometimes this activity takes place during the meeting; other times it goes on backstage. Manipulating menaces a group, as it tends to divide the group into sub-groups or cliques.

*Rationalizing*—explaining failure or inadequacy by finding some unjustified excuse for the failure. A committee chairman may excuse himself for not having his report prepared by stating that he thought the meeting was the following week.

## Summary

All members of a group can act in a manner that assists the group. When they do act this way, they are said to be displaying functional behavior patterns. Functional behavior comprises two types of roles: task roles and maintenance roles. A task role is performed primarily to assist the group attain its goal. Task roles include initiating, contributing, information seeking, opinion seeking, information giving, opinion giving, clarifying, elaborating, coordinating, facilitating, expediting, summarizing, consensus taking, recording, and evaluating. A maintenance role assists the group to become a more cohesive and effective group. These include encouraging, harmonizing, compromising, communicating, standard setting, tension relieving, listening, observing, following, and sensing.

A group member evinces non-functional behavior when he acts so as neither to help the group accomplish its task nor to help it strengthen and maintain itself. But since this behavior is part of every student group, its symptoms should be studied and dealt with constructively. Non-functional behavior includes blocking, aggressing, withdrawing, seeking recognition or status, dominating, special pleading, distracting, manipulating, and rationalizing.

Perhaps it would be wise at this point to stress that at one time or another, most group members play most of the roles described in this chapter. It is harmful to assume that group members perform only one kind of role. Simply because a student does a better job of summarizing than others, it would be a mistake to label that person a "summarizer" and then assume that this could be his only function in a group. In the same way, some group members may "block" more often than others, but they should not be designated as "blockers." They should be helped to substitute positive behavior for their tendency to be negative.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Evaluating Leadership Skills

EVALUATION represents an effort to appraise the value of an activity in terms of its purpose. It includes not only checking to determine to what extent goals have been reached, but also assessing what value those goals have. Using about the same procedure, students evaluate both the progress of their leadership skills and the success of their activities.

Generally, the evaluation process includes the following sequential steps:

(1) Defining the goals;
(2) Planning the experiences that hopefully will lead to attaining the goals;
(3) Measuring the changes that take place as a result of the planned experiences;
(4) Judging the value of the changes.

In actual practice these steps are interrelated. The separation into four steps is strictly for the purpose of analysis. The author is not suggesting that this is the only way a group can engage in the evaluation process. Also, it should be noted that evaluation is a continuous process. It precedes, goes on during, and follows every group activity. And yet, many students think of evaluation as something you do only at the end of an activity.

## Evaluating Individual Growth

Rather than emphasizing the evaluation of student groups and their activities, this booklet will deal with the evaluation of personal growth in leadership. As student leaders, you must often ask yourself questions like these:

- How can I improve my leadership skills?
- How can I get the job done and still be democratic?
- If I become too permissive, will I be accused of "passing the buck"?
- Why do members of my group behave in the manner they do?
- Why can't we get more work done in our meetings?
- Why don't people follow through when they have been given an assignment?
- How can I inspire all members to participate fully in our activities?
- What causes cliques to form?
- What happened to our channels of communication?
- Why don't we have better feedback from the students we represent?

It is more difficult to evaluate leadership attitudes and skills than to evaluate student activities. However, the basic steps in the evaluation process still apply. We will repeat these steps changing only the wording so that they apply specifically to attitudes and skills rather than to group projects and activities. Here they are:

- Defining the attitude or behavior you wish to effect in yourself or in others;
- Planning the experiences which you feel will help you accomplish the changes;
- Measuring the changes which take place as a result of the planned experiences;
- Assigning a value judgment to the changes in terms of the outcomes you hoped to effect.

Two examples will be given, each following the basic steps outlined above.

*Communicating*

Let us assume that you want to become a better communicator. You realize that you have difficulty in getting your ideas accepted. You are not sure whether the fault lies with you or with the group. Sometimes you feel the other person does not listen. In any event, you want to effect a change in your

ability to communicate and in your group's ability to receive your communications. Note that you have already completed step one: you have established the goal of communicating better.

The second step involves planning some experiences that will help you become a better communicator. Some of the following activities should be helpful:

- Check out from the library some reference material which you feel will give you additional information.
- Talk to some experts in the field. Use school resources, such as teachers of English or speech who would be willing to help.
- Eliminate the "filters" which make listening difficult, such as doodling, inattention, allowing your mind to wander, whispering to neighbors, and similar behavior.
- Think about what you want to say before you say it.
- Be sure you say just what you want: no more, no less.
- Try to be clear, simple, direct, and to the point.
- Avoid long complex sentences and talking over the heads of the group.
- Listen for "feedback."

The third step is to measure the changes in your ability to communicate. One useful method of measurement is known as "feedback." This means checking to see if what you thought you said was received accurately by the listeners. You can do this by asking fellow group members to restate in their own words what they thought you said. Or you could subject yourself to an interrogation, asking yourself questions derived from the statements above. For example, ask yourself: "In my last attempt to communicate to the group, were my ideas clear, simple, direct, and to the point? How were they received by the group?"

The last step is to assess the changes in terms of your goal—to be a better communicator. If, as a result of your efforts, you found that you did communicate better—that the message was received—you can say that it probably was a result of the ex-

periences you had and your willingness to "check up" on yourself.

*Decision Making*

Groups are always faced with the problem of looking at alternatives and making wise choices. All student groups must at one time or another recommend action and make decisions.

For purposes of illustration, we will assume that you are the chairman of "The Ways and Means Committee," of your club. Your committee's job is to raise money for the treasury. As chairman, you want to help your group make wise decisions. How do you evaluate your ability to help your group make wise decisions?

Once again the sequence in the evaluation process will be used. You have established a purpose or goal when you recognized the need to make better decisions about fund-raising.

The next step is to select experiences that you think will help. (This is in itself decision making.) As chairman, you may wish to share information about decision making with members of your committee. Let us assume that you find a book that suggests a number of possible procedures for improving decision making, one of which is "brain storming." Your group agrees that "brain storming" would be a useful approach to the problem. Out of the "brain storming" session emerges a number of suggestions about how to raise money: candy sale, dance, coat hanger drive, car wash, white elephant auction, and many more. After much discussion, your club chooses to sponsor a dance.

Duties and responsibilities are then assigned to various club members on the basis of their interests and abilities. Here again, you are participating in the second step of the evaluation process, that of planning the experiences necessary to help your club raise the necessary funds.

The third step in the evaluation process consists of measuring the change in the club's ability to make decisions. As a result of your reading and the club's willingness to try new techniques, the members feel that they were able to accomplish more in less time because they "brainstormed" for ideas and then

discussed advantages and disadvantages of the various proposals. Again, subjective evidence will have to be the "yardstick" to measure the club's ability to make a better decision.

The last step in the evaluation process involves making a judgment on the club's ability to make decisions. Can they do this better now than before? The question is: Do the club members think that their ability to make decisions has improved because of their involvement in the activity? If the answer is yes, then the leader can confidently assume that his efforts to involve the group were successful.

*Group Dynamics for Student Activities*

# Some Practical Suggestions

If a student wishes to improve his behavior in and contribution to his group, he must be willing to assume the responsibility of constant self-evaluation: of his motives, of his actions, of the impressions he makes and the effect his behavior has on others, and of his goals. This is true of all students in groups, both officers and members.

At the same time, any student group as a whole that wishes to increase its effectiveness should study the behavioral forces at work within it. For the group, as in the case of the individual group member, perception and understanding must precede improvement.

The suggestions in this chapter are designed to aid the group and its members in this process of analysis and improvement.

## Avoid Generalization

Try to think of behavior as being specific rather than general. Avoid statements such as, "Mary always monopolizes the conversation; no one else ever gets a chance to talk." Instead say, "I noticed yesterday when Mary talked so much, Elizabeth and some of the other less vocal members did not participate."

## Discuss Ideas, Not Personalities

Try to avoid personal references, especially if they are negative. Rather, think and express yourself in terms of *ideas*. It is better to say, "I think that Jim's *idea* to sponsor a foreign student has some merit. However, I noticed that many of our



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group felt that the *idea* came too late in the school year for us to do much about it." This is better than, "Jim, you weren't thinking clearly when you suggested a foreign student this year."

### Be Positive

Most group members react better to the positive approach than to the negative. "What can we do to improve our meetings?" is a better question to ask than, "What's wrong with our meetings?"

### Prepare an Agenda

Good meetings—formal and informal—do not just happen: they are planned. To ensure that the meeting is organized, the leaders ought to prepare an agenda. An example of an agenda for a typical student council meeting follows.

Call to Order

Pledge–Opening Ceremony

Roll Call

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Treasurer's Report

Reports from Committees
  Standing Committees
  Special Committees

Unfinished Business
  List items if known

New Business

Announcements

Adjournment

## Ask Questions

Many suggestions can be phrased as questions and in that way avoid the "hard-sell" flavor. Every group gets a little impatient with the person who has a tendency to begin each sentence with the phrase, "I think we ought to. . . ." You flatter your group when you ask them a question, "What do *you* think about this suggestion . . . ?"

## Improve Your Powers of Observation

Two student leaders were asked to give their opinions about a committee meeting both had attended. Bill gave a rather typical answer: "Well, I guess it was O.K. We didn't get much done though. As usual it started late and ran overtime; I didn't get home until 6:00 p.m." Tom described the same committee meeting differently: "I noticed several things last night that made me wonder whether our committee could and should learn to work better as a group. For one thing, the committee meeting began at 4:20 p.m. instead of at 4:00 p.m. During the first thirty minutes we just went over what we had already agreed upon. I also observed that we frequently got off the topic. Several members related lengthy personal experiences which had nothing to do with our task. When we finally got down to business we found we were in general agreement on the basic ideas. However, two of our members got into a heated discussion over the wording of the proposed motion. I noticed that most of the members squirmed and kept looking at their watches."

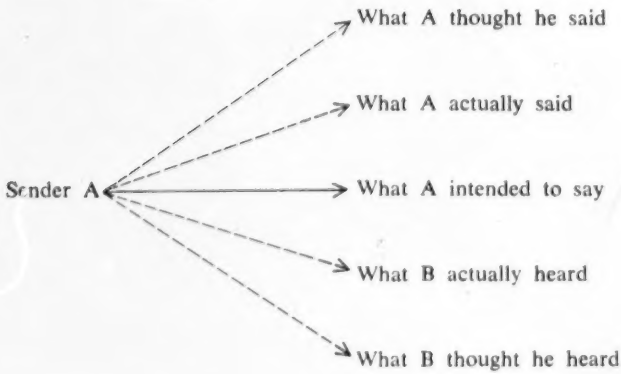
These two reports about the same committee meeting suggest some important differences in the ability of two students to observe and record what actually went on. You will make a significant contribution to your group by learning to observe and to describe group behavior precisely.

## Communication Exercise

Just how good is the communication within your group? Behavioral scientists have ample evidence to support the feeling that our "channels of communication" can be improved.

Most people think of communication as a simple task of sending a message from one person to another as illustrated below:

A more accurate picture of communication would look like this:




A good exercise in communication is to compare the two diagrams above.

## Prepare Your Meeting Facilities

The physical conditions of the meeting room might well be an important factor in the success or failure of the meeting. Every group meeting needs the proper facilities, equipment, and supplies, at the right place and at the right time. The following check list may suggest one you might develop for your group.

| MEETING CHECK LIST | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Item* | *Person Responsible* | √ |
| Speaker invited | | |
| Meeting place arranged for | | |
| Announcements made of meeting | | |
| Table and chairs arranged | | |
| Name tags or name plates | | |
| Blackboard, chalk, eraser, etc. | | |
| P.A. system, if needed | | |
| Projector, screen, etc., if needed | | |
| Lectern—speaker stand, if needed | | |
| Paper, pencils, etc. | | |
| Refreshments, if needed | | |
| Others you can suggest | | |

## Study Participation Patterns

The next time you participate in a group activity, find out how many members are truly involved in the discussion. Remember, participation is not limited to talking; it includes attentive listening, nodding approval, a smile, and other gestures. Alert yourself to the various ways group members participate in your group.

An easy way to observe the participation patterns in a group is to list the various members of the group and then chart their participation patterns. The following form serves as an example.

| PARTICIPATION CHART | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *List of Members* | *Frequency* | *Length* | *Directed to Group or Individual* | *Description of Specific Behavior* |
| Bill | | | | |
| Mary | | | | |
| Esther | | | | |
| T. J. | | | | |

## Consider an Evaluation Form

Evaluation is an important part of group effectiveness. Officers and others responsible for planning programs may find this form helpful.

### Post-Meeting Evaluation Form

Date of Meeting _____

*Directions:* Please give us your honest opinion of this meeting. It will help your officers plan better meetings. Do not sign your name.

(1) What was your overall opinion of the meeting?
Excellent_____ Good_____ So-So_____ Not So Hot_____

(2) What did you like about the meeting?_____
_____
_____

(3) What did you *not* like about the meeting?_____.
_____
_____

(4) What suggestions do you have for future meetings?___
_____
_____

## Analyze Role Behavior

Occasionally group members may wish to study themselves and each other as they are seen by the group as a whole. *This exercise should be done only by mature groups and under supervision of capable adult leadership.* Each group will want to develop specific statements of particular interest to them. In general, positive behavior should be described and negative behavior omitted. A summary chart might be prepared and the individual roles studied.

*Directions:* The following statements are descriptive of the way some people work in groups. In reading t.em, you will be reminded of particular persons in our group. Fill in the blanks with the names of the three group members to whom the statement most accurately applies. Include your own name where appropriate.

1. _____, _____, and _____ can always be counted on to come up with some good ideas.
2. The most helpful persons in our group are_____, _____, and _____.
3. The three people in our group who are most willing to serve on "work committees" are _____, _____, and _____.
4. No matter what the situation is, _____, _____, and _____ seem to understand how others feel about the problem.
5. If I had my "druthers" I would most like to serve on a committee with _____, _____, and _____.

# References


BONNER, HUBERT. *Group Dynamics—Principles and Applications.* New York: The Ronald Press, 1959.

A comprehensive early work designed as a textbook for college students. Chapter I is especially helpful in that it defines group dynamics and traces its origins and development. High school students should be able to benefit from several sections in this book.

CARTWRIGHT, DORWIN P. and ALVIN F. ZANDER, eds. *Group Dynamics; Research and Theory.* Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Co., 1960. 642 pp.

A leading textbook in the field. A collection of scholarly articles on leadership and group dynamics for the person who understands research methods and terminology. Difficult for beginners, but one of the best if you have the background and experience to master the text. Each section contains a helpful introductory chapter.

ELLIOTT, GRACE LOUCKS. *How to Help Groups Make Decisions.* New York: The Association Press, 1959.

A small, inexpensive, condensed revision of an earlier book by the same author. Well-written and appropriate for high school students. This book is part of a set of small books called *The Leadership Library.* Other titles in the series of interest to high school students include: *How to Be A Modern Leader, How to Develop Better Leaders, How to Work with Teen-Age Groups.*

KNOWLES, MALCOLM and HULDA. *Introduction to Group Dynamics.* New York: The Association Press, 1959. 96 pp.

Students will find this book by two of the experts in the field very useful. It combines theory and practice in an imaginative way. Perhaps the best introduction to group dynamics available.

MILES, MATTHEW B., *Learning to Work in Groups.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959. 285 pp.

Designed especially for educational leaders, but administrators and teachers will find it valuable. Its strength lies in the many practical applications to teaching. The adult adviser of school groups can adapt the many examples and case studies to his groups.

STRAUSS, BERT and FRANCES, *New Ways to Better Meetings.* New York: The Viking Press, 1960. 177 pp.

An interesting book for students and adults alike; it includes

many examples and illustrations. You will want this book in your high school library.

THELEN, HERBERT A., *Dynamics of Groups at Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954 (Revised paperback edition, 1962). 379 pp.

One of the best texts in the field; available in paperback edition. The strength of this book lies in the many practical applications. Faculty advisers and students will find many references to familiar faculty and student groups.

### OTHER SOURCES

SCHMIDT, WARREN G., ed. *Looking Into Leadership*. Washington, D.C.: Leadership Resources, Inc., 1750 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. 20006.

The editor has selected capable authors to write on 14 specific topics of interest to leaders. Each booklet is written in easy-to-understand language, complete with attractive illustrations. Available from the publisher at $1.25 each. Titles include:

1. *Styles of Leadership*, by Warren H. Schmidt
2. *Authority & Responsibility*, by David S. Brown
3. *Group Effectiveness*, by Gordon L. Lippitt
4. *Self-Development*, by Malcolm S. Knowles
5. *Planning for Change*, by Thomas R. Bennett II
6. *Decision Making*, by David S. Brown
7. *Personal Communication*, by Leslie E. This
8. *Motivating Individuals*, by Paul C. Buchanan
9. *Creative Thinking*, by Irving R. Weschler
10. *The Consultative Process*, by Richard Beckhard
11. *Staff-Line Relations*, by Ross Pollock
12. *Appraisal of Personnel*, by Michael G. Blansfield
13. *The Learning Climate*, by Malcolm S. Knowles
14. *Ethics*, by Gordon L. Lippitt

*National Training Laboratories*

Perhaps the finest single source of information on group dynamics, leadership training, and research in the behavioral sciences is the National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.